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**Chair**

**Mr. Greg Kerr**



## Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

Thursday, November 17, 2011

• (0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC)):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We do have a quorum, so we will start.

I would indicate that we're still awaiting one witness, but we're going to start with the general. As we have done before, we'll hear from both witnesses and then go to questions and answers. If for some reason we have only one witness, then certainly we'll spend more time on questions and answers, or you can tell us what it's like down south or whatever you want to do.

Anyway, I'd very much like to welcome Lieutenant-General Louis Cuppens this morning.

As you know, we're continuing our examination of our study topics. This morning we are looking at the Last Post Fund to start, and then we will deal with the Power Workers' Union information that will be provided.

Welcome. As you know, we allow ten minutes, give or take, and then we go around the table for questions and answers.

Thank you for coming this morning.

**Lieutenant-General (Retired) Louis Cuppens (Past National President, Last Post Fund):** Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm pleased to bring you greetings from our national president, Lieutenant-Colonel Evelyn Kelly, who is unable to be present today. I will do my utmost to represent her and the organization that we serve.

The topic of commemoration in the 21st century is one that should appeal to all Canadians, especially to those who have had their lives influenced in some way by Canada's armed forces and veterans. I am one of those who were so influenced. As you can see from my biographical sketch, I was born in Nijmegen in the Netherlands during World War II. Canada so influenced my family that we became immigrants to Canada in 1950, and I chose to spend my adult life in the service of Canada in the Canadian armed forces.

I am a member of a number of veterans associations and willingly serve in various capacities for the Last Post Fund, the Royal Canadian Legion, ANAVETS, the Corps of Commissionaires, the Royal United Services Institute, and a number of Canadian military organizations.

It is my understanding that you wish me to speak to you today about the Last Post Fund and its activities and challenges, so I will not be addressing the other organizations in my testimony unless you ask.

We have just concluded Veterans' Week, and I salute my comrades in the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada for the delivery of well-executed commemoration events across Canada and globally.

When I am reflecting, I am reminded often of the spoken statement of the mayor of Colorado Springs. That was the location where I last served in the military as deputy commander in chief of the NORAD. Mayor Makepeace would conclude most of her speeches with this quotation: "Colorado Springs is a place where every day is military and veterans' appreciation day". I wish this sentiment were the same right across Canada, but sadly I report that it is not.

I consider myself a champion of veterans' issues, and I am proud to dedicate my free time to the cause of veterans. As a retired lieutenant-general, I am easily found in New Brunswick, where I reside, and I answer the calls for help willingly.

Now I will focus on the Last Post Fund. We have been supporting veterans since the act of charity of our founder, Arthur Hair, in 1909. He encountered a veteran named James Daly, who, after dying and being abandoned, would have had his remains consigned to medical research and thereafter been placed in a pauper's grave. Hair chose to honour Daly by soliciting funds to provide for a dignified funeral. Through that action, the Last Post Fund was born. Since that time we have facilitated the funeral and burial of nearly 150,000 veterans.

Over time, with legislative changes in 1921 and finally in 1995, the Last Post Fund has, with funds provided by the Canadian government, delivered the federal government's veterans funeral and burial program. During this same period and up to the present time, the Last Post Fund continued to organize commemoration activities across Canada. Whether through the establishment of fields of honour or columbaria or the marking of previously unmarked veterans' graves, the Last Post Fund has been there to commemorate veterans.

As a not-for-profit corporation with letters patent, we have partnered with Veterans Affairs Canada to deliver the veterans funeral and burial program. We have done so for some time, and we have a footprint across Canada through the presence of our provincial boards, our volunteers, and our salaried employees. Since our founding in 1909, we have remained independent of the Royal Canadian Legion and ANAVETS, but we have always ensured that they are well aware of the programs that we deliver to veterans.

Our website and the brochure that I have sent to you outline the programs that we deliver and the regulations that govern the same. In short, traditional veterans of World War II and Korea service who are qualified financially may be eligible for a funeral and burial benefit. Those few modern-day veterans in receipt of a disability pension may also be eligible for benefits, subject to the same means test.

To keep this simple and for illustrative purposes, if a married veteran's estate has fewer assets than \$12,015, excluding the house and car, this veteran would be eligible for benefits, depending on his military service. I should point out that as a result of program review in 1995, this amount is half of what was allowed prior to 1995.

The number of veterans of World War II and Korea has been decreasing dramatically in recent years. There are fewer than 130,000 remaining, and it's estimated that this group will cease to exist in only a few years. On the other hand, it's estimated that there are nearly 600,000 modern-day veterans, some of whom may need the benefits of the funeral and burial program. However, to estimate how many would need to do so is difficult to determine.

Suffice it to say there will likely be a need for access to the veterans funeral and burial program in the years to come. For more than a decade, the Last Post Fund has advocated that the program be extended to modern-day veterans in the same way it was offered to traditional veterans. Unfortunately, the governments of Canada during this period have declined to do so, despite the urging of all veterans organizations.

The question that comes to mind is how many modern-day veterans have been denied access to funeral and burial benefits? Unfortunately, our staff did not keep records on how many veterans have been told they were ineligible for such benefits. We are now keeping records of this. What we do know is that donation moneys have been used to provide dignified funerals for some modern-day veterans. I don't consider this to be appropriate. A veteran is a veteran, and all veterans deserve the final commemoration of a funeral.

For a number of reasons, the graves of some veterans were not marked with gravestones, whether upright or flat. As this became evident, the Last Post Fund sought the assistance of Veterans Affairs to resolve the marking of unmarked graves. Such is a Last Post Fund program, and it continues. In essence, where a grave remains unmarked for more than five years, the Last Post Fund will provide and install a military-type marker for such graves.

Prior to 2010 we had a national office and branch offices in each province except Prince Edward Island, since it was affiliated with New Brunswick. Each branch had an office, a charter, and a volunteer board of directors.

Shortly after becoming the national president, along with my team I began to exercise cost-saving measures to minimize our operating expenses. This was done without any urging or demand from Veterans Affairs Canada, but it came from our experience as prudent managers of public moneys.

We implemented a 10% across-the-board reduction in operating expenses; diminished the numbers of publicly funded board meetings; froze hirings; joined the branches of Manitoba and Saskatchewan; and eventually restructured the organization, with a resultant reduction in eight salaried personnel positions from our 36-person salary base. In so doing, we now have a salaried regional structure of four regions that are accountable to the national office.

There is the western region, where the regional office is in Edmonton, with offices and counsellors in British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The Ontario regional office is in Toronto. The Quebec regional office is in Montreal. And the Atlantic region has its regional office in Halifax, with offices and counsellors in New Brunswick, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.

We also explored with Veterans Affairs Canada the feasibility of co-locating some of our district offices with them. However, the needs of Veterans Affairs Canada for office space made this a non-starter. Perhaps this might be achievable in the future.

We have an information technology system that allows for rapid settlement of claims from any of our offices anywhere in the country. As an example, a counsellor in Newfoundland-Labrador can actually process a claim for an individual in New Brunswick, and this can be performed from any of our offices.

● (0855)

Having shaved our operating expenses as much as possible, we find that our operating expenses are still too high compared with program costs. Our operating costs are about 28% of the program, so further reductions in salaried staff will be necessary. Our executive committee is examining further restructuring and staff reductions; therefore, it's likely that a phased reduction in salaried personnel, leading to the establishment of a call centre, will occur in the future. Such a restructure would also lead to the closure of a number of offices across Canada, thereby realizing further savings in operating expenses. Unfortunately, with office closures our footprint across Canada will decrease.

I should point out, however, that the drop-in client numbers at our offices have significantly diminished. Most, if not all, of our client applications occur telephonically and not by in-person visits. Given this situation, the migration to a call-centre method of staffing is quite practical.

The present veterans burial regulations were finally approved in 2005. While the regulations did not cater for certain expenses, Veterans Affairs staff decided not to seek amendments to the regulations until such time as the current regulations were approved. Since approval of the VBRs, as we call them, several attempts have been made to amend these regulations; however, these have so far been unsuccessful. Had these amendments been approved and the means testing baseline amended, our operating costs percentage would have diminished slightly.

Members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP have had the allowable expenses for funerals increased significantly, but not so for veterans. The veterans burial regulations allowable expenses have remained static. It is our contention that the family of a veteran approved for a funeral benefit should be able to spend the allowable amount within the funding envelope defined by the government.

Further, when the veterans burial regulations were written and approved, the approved items and excluded items were listed within the regulations. These allowances and restrictions, promulgated in regulations, restrict the speedy resolution of needed changes.

You may wonder what some of these present restrictions for veterans include. Again, I wish to stress that the funeral programs for Canadian Forces and RCMP members do not have these restrictions. What is not allowed or budgeted for are obituary notices, death notices, clergy, flowers, and even the Canadian flag. Further, within the regulations some items are capped. Let me cite just a few: last illness expenses are capped at \$75; funeral services are capped at \$3,600; however, if the funeral requires the services of two funeral directors at different locations, the transportation costs are capped at \$500; preparation of the remains, grave liners, etc., are also capped.

I am aware that total cost allowed for the funeral of a serving Canadian Forces member exceeds \$13,000, and basically, as stated by the Chief of the Defence Staff some time ago, funerals cost whatever it takes, within reason. Changes to the veterans burial regulations have been and continue to be advocated by the Last Post Fund, by veterans associations, and by the Canadian funeral directors association; however, success has eluded us so far.

I mentioned earlier in my briefing that we commemorate the service of veterans. We do so by facilitating the burials of World War II and Korean War veterans who are financially challenged and eligible modern-day veterans. We do so in conducting remembrance-type ceremonies across Canada. We do so in operating a number of fields of honour and columbaria in various places across Canada. We do so in operating the Last Post Fund's National Field of Honour in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, which is now a national historic site that began operations in the 1930s. At that site more than 20,000 persons are interred. Finally, we do so in delivering the Last Post Fund's unmarked grave program. Since the inception of this program in 1996, we have identified and marked more than 3,000 graves across Canada.

● (0900)

In closing, the Last Post Fund began in 1909, and this not-for-profit entity has continued to serve and commemorate veterans since then. We have advocated changes to programs and regulations in a non-adversarial manner. After all, we deliver a federal government program in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada.

I thank you for your attention. I am prepared to answer any of your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, General.

We are going to hear from our second witness. I am very pleased that Colonel Nellestyn arrived.

I understand you are going to refer to the documentary process. We will allow you about ten minutes, give or take. We are very flexible here.

**Colonel (Retired) Andrew Nellestyn (Co-Producer, The Documentary series, The Veterans, Power Workers' Union):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I am pleased and honoured to have been invited to speak before you this morning.

If I may just make an editorial comment, having heard Louis speak and knowing what he does, I fully support the advocacy that he has brought before this committee with respect to burials. I must also say that coming to sessions such as this is rather pleasant, mainly because I see people I haven't seen for some while. Louis is one of them. I haven't seen Louis for years, actually. He looks just as well as he did in former years.

What I want to talk to you about this morning is a documentary series that began about three and a half years ago. A gentleman by the name of Daniel Rodrique, who is the producer, had a vision of recording, in historical context, the stories of veterans and the experiences they had throughout a continuum commencing with the First World War and going up to, and including, Afghanistan. That dream was realized through the generous support of a number of private individuals, corporations, the government, and foundations. The principal sponsor of this documentary series is the Power Workers' Union, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario.

You might think the participation of the Power Workers' Union is a bit odd. Well, no, it really isn't, because the Power Workers' Union, like a number of other unions, employs a great number of veterans. To the dismay of the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces, they poach technical people as well. They had a great interest in supporting this particular project. The other organizations that were quite supportive and encouraging were the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Air Force Association of Canada, at whose annual general meeting some three plus years ago we presented a promotional video outlining the documentary. Everything from there on is history.

The principal target of the documentary series is young Canadians. Why is this? It's because the documentary wishes to illustrate the attributes of civics, citizenship, nation-building, and leadership, as illustrated through the participation of Canada in foreign missions and conflicts. It documents the effects on Canada, Canadians, and the military. It takes as its starting point World War I. Why World War I? World War I marked the coming of nationhood to Canada and to Canadians. For example, the Canadian Expeditionary Force, commanded by General Currie, was commanded by a Canadian. More to the point, General Currie reported to Ottawa and not the Colonial Office in Great Britain. The other reason is that World War I marks the industrialization of Canada and rather a monumental change in the demographics as they relate to employment, migrations after the war, and a number of other factors.

There are two streams to this documentary. The first is the military stream. That includes the First World War, the Second World War, Korea, peacekeeping operations, the Cold War, and participation in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. What it looks at is how the changing nature of warfare affects military operations, military doctrine, education, training, and capital equipment purchases. What is also interesting is that it includes the contributions of civilians—that is, non-uniformed Canadians.

● (0905)

To cite an example vis-à-vis World War II—and some of that occurred in World War I as well—there's Rosie the Riveter: women working on the factory floors assembling aircraft, becoming machinists, replacing people in offices who participated in the theatres of war.

The other aspect is that it includes NGOs. It includes St. John Ambulance, the Salvation Army, and now it's called the Canadian Forces personnel support system, as well as Tim Hortons. And yes, Tim Hortons is very much involved in raising the morale of the troops, as it did in Kandahar. Whether or not it will be located in Kabul as the mission now changes to one of training remains to be seen.

It also addresses defence science and technology and the Canadian defence industrial base. Defence science technology is transferable. It has made an impact on positioning Canada in leadership positions, in the export market in specific areas, and in addition is a net contributor to the economy. The same applies to the Canadian defence industry per se.

As you can see, it is unique in the sense that it covers a time continuum and it covers all people in Canadian society, whether they be uniformed or not.

The other phase, which is really an umbrella phase, is the impact on Canada and Canadians. I think it's fair to say that as the military reflects the values, the mores, the culture of the society from which it comes and the society it serves, it also works in the reverse direction.

We have seen since World War I, for example, changes in Canadian values, Canadian culture, governance per se, and for that matter, Canada's position in the world. By that I suppose it might be trite to say that you have to pay the ante to play poker, but it is a fact of life. So Canada's participation in ensuring security, in protecting democracy, and championing human rights is indeed part of that ante that allows and has resulted in Canada's participation around world tables—for example, a seat at the tables in Paris on the conclusion of World War I, around which the shape of Europe was determined. It also impacts, for example, Canada's position in international fora, whether they be G-8, G-20, the IMF, the World Bank, and on the list goes.

In essence, what this documentary is trying to portray is the evolution of Canada through the eyes of those who were there.

The documentary was to consist of 52 episodes, but it's somewhat grown. I suspect that by the time we're finished it will be 60-plus episodes, each of 40 minutes in length. It will be in a bilingual format. And thanks to the kind generosity of the Department of Veterans Affairs, we've been able to ensure that the bilingual format is available. I spent seven weeks in Afghanistan, in January and February of this year, filming most of it outside the wire to ensure that this particular aspect was captured as well. And as some of you may know Roto 10, which is the last combat operation Roto for Task Force Kandahar, was based on the battle group that came out of CFB Valcartier.

The documentary has been gifted to the people of Canada free of charge. It is available on the Internet. We are presently negotiating with some of the broadcasters, television particularly, to have it shown in that particular media as well. But one can go to the Internet at [www.pwu.ca](http://www.pwu.ca), click on the logo of the veterans, and it is downloadable from there. And that "pwu" is the Power Workers' Union of Ontario.

The documentary was premiered on November 4, about a week or so ago, at the Canadian War Museum, in the Barney Danson Theatre. It was extremely well attended.

● (0910)

The Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Honourable Steven Blaney, spoke to the attendees, as did the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Walter Natynczyk.

Each of the episodes is introduced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Senator Pamela Wallin.

I might add that another aspect of the documentary is that it covers the media. It's important, because as the military reflects Canadian society, the media goes a little step further: it reflects Canada's values and society, but it also helps shape and influence them. In that respect, there was participation by Senator Wallin; Brian Stewart of the CBC, who I'm sure is well known to all of you; Tom Popyk, a lesser-known war correspondent who finds himself pretty well everywhere there is some conflict; and Matt Fisher.

That pretty well concludes my presentation in the context of the theme of this morning's meeting, commemorative celebrations in the 21st century. We're very pleased to have had an opportunity, through the production of this documentary, to celebrate contributions made by our serving men and women in uniform, as well as our veterans.

It has been quite an experience being involved in this. It marks quite a departure from what I am accustomed to doing, which constitutes about 23 years of service in the Canadian Forces, followed by about an equal period as a senior corporate executive in Canada and abroad. I may fancy myself as a bit of a videographer, although I rather doubt I could make that my daytime job, but it was a lot of fun.

It also caused me to reflect. I thought I had some notion of the role of Canada's military in nation-building, but I found that in travelling about and speaking to veterans and serving men and women of the armed forces, my knowledge was rather limited. In that regard, it was rather illuminating, and it increased my admiration and respect for those particular individuals, including Canadians who did not serve in uniform but whose contributions were critical. Without those contributions we could not have concluded in the fashion we did.

Interviewing veterans turned out to be a painful experience. My principal deployments abroad during the time I was in the military were related to peacekeeping operations, which are very different from peacemaking operations or coalition operations such as we experience today. The suffering and pain that is experienced by veterans and those who still serve in the military and their families and friends is unimaginable. How they manage to cope impresses me tremendously. That's why the advocacy that Lou has presented this morning in terms of—I don't want to trivialize—the cradle-to-grave aspect is very important.

As far as the changing nature of warfare, we look at World War I as shell shock, World War II and Korea as battle fatigue, and most recently post-traumatic stress disorder, which has now been bundled into something very much larger called occupational stress injuries. In this regard, I commend the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of National Defence, and the Royal Canadian Legion for doing what they can to help people who are so distressed cope.

● (0915)

That's not to say that all that can be done has been done, because there certainly is a lot more to do. But there has been a start, and it's through the concern and the care of people such as General Cuppens here and others that this is now being addressed.

It's been an experience. It's been a lot of fun. I'm glad it's over. I can get back to my other life, whatever it is going to be after this particular experience. Again, I'd like to thank you very much for inviting me to be with you this morning to share these particular experiences.

I have here a memory stick that has on it an interview that I did with the CBC, which takes on another vein in which you may be interested. I have brought you some programs that represent what transpired during the gala premiere at the War Museum. You're welcome to have one of these. If you need more, please ask and they

will be there. It also includes a list of those people who contributed in one fashion or another. It's quite extensive, and I thank them all.

The painting here was volunteered by a local artist who wants to express in her own way her thanks to our veterans and serving men and women. Her name is Shelly Den. Indeed, it went very well.

Thank you.

● (0920)

[*Translation*]

I am very happy to be here this morning.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Colonel.

There's a lot of material for the members of the committee to get into. So we're going to start with the NDP and Mr. Stoffer for five minutes.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I apologize for being just a bit tardy. Romeo Dallaire was giving a speech this morning at the Salvation Army.

Colonel, my first question is for you. I noticed the list of people who are in the documentary but I don't see General Dallaire's name there. Was he offered an opportunity to participate?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Yes.

General Dallaire is actually one of the first people we interviewed. There is an entire episode—I believe it's 43 minutes—that features General Dallaire. He's a great friend of mine, a tremendous Canadian, and a soldier, indeed. Yes, he is included. There are many others on the list. You will find those who are on it if you go to the website I indicated a little earlier. There are many. There are civilians, military people, corporate people, government people, and all walks and levels of Canadian society.

Thank you for your question. It would have been an omission of the most glaring nature for him not to have been included.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Colonel, I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Cuppens, it's good to talk to a fellow Dutchman. Thank you very much. Thank you for your services as well, sir, in and out of uniform.

In the statement you gave to us, I can read between the lines the frustration your organization has. We deal with families all the time who have been denied access to a proper burial for their heroes. I see in your pamphlet what frustrates them: the means test—disabled veterans “may” be eligible for benefits—or the other one, that veterans of World War II who are able to qualify financially “may” be eligible.

At the very end, you're absolutely correct when you say that a veteran is a veteran, and all veterans deserve the commemoration of a funeral. I couldn't agree with you more. This is the frustration I personally have. I have always indicated—and you've indicated here—that for those who serve our country, Remembrance Day is every day. Every one of these heroes should be treated with dignity, all the way to, and including, the headstone. I'd like you to comment on that as well.

You also mention the 28% administration fee. Your budget is around \$9 million, I believe, give or take a few dollars.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Our current-year budget is \$11.8 million for program.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** It's \$11.8 million. Sorry....

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** And it costs us just shy... We budgeted it for about \$3.1 million. That's administrative costs.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** I was talking to a few of the folks in Halifax. They indicated there are some solutions to that. Could you provide some of the solutions you see in order to reduce the administration, not necessarily in terms of salaries or people, but in terms of facilities, in order to transfer some of those moneys on to the assistance for veterans' funerals?

Thank you both very much for coming.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Mr. Stoffer, thank you for your support to veterans as well.

I'll comment first on the first part of your question regarding the statements made in our brochure about the words "may be eligible". When this program was initially set up and finally approved in regulations in the year 2005 there had been already some changes to who would be eligible for a veteran's funeral. The first criterion is there must be a demonstration that the individual who passed away is indeed a veteran. It takes a little bit of time to get the archived material to determine if this veteran served his country.

After that it's a matter of choice for the government in regulation that this is a program to look after the burial of veterans who are, at the time of their death, in financial need.

Prior to program review in 1995, the eligibility criteria and moneys were that roughly \$25,000 could be in the estate of a veteran if he was married, exclusive of the house and car. In 1995, as a result of program review, this means test dropped to \$12,015. By virtue of doing that, it then denied a whole group of veterans who had before that date been eligible because their estates in 1994 could have been \$25,000. Now we've just slashed that in half.

If the veteran who is deceased has no larger amount in his estate after all the bills are paid of \$12,015, he is then eligible for a funeral benefit. It has to do with the moneys allocated in law by the Government of Canada. It has nothing to do with the Last Post Fund.

Continuing on, yes, in my opening remarks I attempted to convey that the Last Post Fund has been frustrated by the slowness of change. We used to pass humour about how long does it take to have regulations amended? Well, it took ten years to have them created and they were flawed right from the outset. The strategy adopted by the bureaucrats was let's not derail the regulatory process; let's get the regulations approved and then we'll go for the amendments.

We have been working on the amendments now since 2005. It looks like it may take just as long to get the amendments approved as it did to get the regulations themselves approved.

Also, I made the statement in my opening remarks that there are things in the regulations themselves that shackle us in delivering the funeral and burial benefit. I gave you specific examples of what is not allowed in a veteran's funeral: the obituary, the death notice, the clergy, flowers, and even the Canadian flag. I can give you more specifics if you're curious, but in the case of a serving member of the Canadian Forces or RCMP there are no such restrictions. There is just an envelope of money to look after the funeral. And as the former CDS General Hillier announced one time, a funeral costs whatever it takes.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** General, we have a time allotment. I know more information will flow as you move on.

I'd now like to move to Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Mr. Nellestyn. The Power Workers' Union has a large membership in my riding in Bruce County. For the video, who is your target audience? I guess it could be all Canadians, but is it specifically targeted to any demographic in Canadian society? What kind of impact are you looking for with your video?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** The documentary is for all Canadians. With respect to demographics, it includes all demographics. In fact, it was a representation on a demographic basis as well, both geographical and with respect to ethnicity, etc.

The intent really is to illustrate to Canadians what the military has contributed to nation-building and for young Canadians, on the basis that they are tomorrow's leaders, to have an illustration of, as I stated, civics, citizenship, nation-building, and leadership as reflected through this particular vehicle.

Does that answer your question?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Yes, it does.

I guess the cost for a Canadian to view this is zero.

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Zero.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** It's zero. So when the cost is zero you want as many to see it as possible. Obviously you had your kick-off last week, but how are you going to roll this out so that every Canadian has a chance to see this and knows about it?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Let me just address one issue on the cost. The documentary was made on a volunteer basis. The production team in essence consisted of three people: the producer, myself as the co-producer, and a cameraman-editor. We dedicated three and a half years to this. It was a labour of love. It was also a labour of necessity, because the ultimate purpose is to ensure that we don't forget, that we continue to honour, we continue to appreciate, but also that we grow on the basis of not just what the military but also what Canadians themselves can do in times of conflict and crisis. That's the impact we wish to leave.



On what we're doing to promote this, I think you have an opportunity to look at the people who have been thanked in this particular program. We've reached and touched a great number of people in Canadian society, all of whom in one way or another are in a position to assist with its promotion.

When we first started, those in the media were suggesting that this should be focused on television broadcast, on the media for young people. I'm not quite sure where young ends and whatever begins, but let us say that up to the age of 35 it's the Internet, and that is who we want to reach. It will be packaged. It has been left with the Canadian War Museum's archive and the Military History Research Centre, but we also have in the interim a great number of people to promote it. We've worked with the teachers' union in Ontario, and we're doing so with those across the country, and also here in Ottawa with the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board to get this into the classrooms, through the branches of the Legion, through those members of the media who are in position to move this forward.

As I said, we're in the process of discussing with media—for example, Discovery and History Channel, TVO, PBS, mainline broadcasters in Canada—how they can use it. Obviously a mainline broadcaster is not going to carry a series of 52, because it has to build advertisers around that. But yes, I'm very pleased about the number of people we've been able to reach, and this will not stop in terms of further promotion and accessibility, and knowledge.

● (0930)

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** That's good.

**The Chair:** A quick question and answer, please.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Right. Just to that point, I'm glad that 35 at least is what you consider young. I appreciate that.

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Would you be included in that?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** I think I should be, yes.

I have time for a quick question. If we run out of time, then maybe you could touch on it. Could you describe the mechanics of the relationship with the Veterans Affairs Canada field staff? Obviously they must work very closely with your staff. If you could give the committee time, if there is time, or pick up on it later, how does it work, and is it working well?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I mentioned that we have counsellors in district or branch offices in each province across the country. That may not exist in years to come, but the relationship between each of those district offices and their counterparts in Veterans Affairs is a must. To start with, we have to determine whether the person who died is actually a veteran, so the information is a two-way flow. The cooperation among our people and Veterans Affairs Canada is excellent, whether it comes from the Canada Remembers director, right down to the counsellors within each branch across Canada. It's a great partnership. A great love, if you will, of Canadian veterans exists in both fields.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Now to Mr. Casey for five minutes.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Cuppens, my questions are going to be for you.

That's with the greatest of respect, Colonel.

You indicate in your presentation that success in terms of getting changes to the regulations has eluded you. If you're not already aware of this, I think you'll be pleased to know that at least one party has taken up your cause on the floor of the House of Commons and in the Senate. On September 28 I questioned the minister on this very topic—you're aware of that—and again on the 29th. I just want to reference his answer to me on the 28th. When I challenged him on the discrepancy between funeral costs for serving members and funeral costs for veterans, one of the things he said in the last sentence of the answer was “We will continue working with the Last Post Fund and exploring other ways to provide quality services to our veterans.”

He gave that answer on September 28. Since September 28, what other ways to provide quality services to our veterans has the minister explored with you?

● (0935)

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Since that time we have had a number of engagements by Veterans Affairs. This relates to the question that Mr. Stoffer asked as well, concerning our budget line.

The number of traditional veterans and veterans of Korea who are currently eligible for the program has been steadily diminishing. As Mr. Danson so famously said, one thing we veterans all share in common is a 100% mortality rate.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** The number of veterans in the country has been declining. Therefore, our program costs have been diminishing; i.e., we're not delivering the same number of funerals every year.

So the minister has looked at our program costs with his chief of staff, and the chief of staff has engaged us a number of times since your dialogue with the minister in an effort to try to diminish the costs and—I guess I can indulge this group in confidence—the outcome of the savings in program costs could very well be translated into moneys to deliver funeral and burial programs to modern-day veterans who are no longer in the program.

In other words, there's an offset, and we're trying to find that offset. This is one of the strategies his staff has engaged us in. He has asked that we not broadcast that openly, and I've done so as best I can. The second—

**The Chair:** Just to caution you, in case you go any further, this is a public forum, so I can't account for what members will say once they leave this place.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes, and again, as an agent of government in delivering this program, I'm quite at liberty to say what I have said.

The second part is—and this has not been well advertised yet—that since just about the first of this month, the Last Post Fund has engaged in a fundraising campaign. Our honorary chairperson is General Lewis MacKenzie. It's our hope that in this year, this 12-month period forthcoming, once we do the official launch we will raise as an initial target one million dollars. This is just in case regulations don't get changed, because we don't want to be in the business of saying no.

I trust I've answered your question, Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** So your fundraising is with the private sector.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Okay. To make up for the shortfall in what you're getting from government?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes. In essence, yes, because modern-day veterans, unless they're in receipt of a benefit from Veterans Affairs, are not eligible. We started in 1909 by raising money to bury those for whom there was no program. So if modern-day veterans come to us and ask for assistance, we should be able to deliver it. Right now, we don't have a lot of money in our donation account, but we hope to raise about a million this year.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** General Cuppens, you'll be pleased to know that I actually wrote to the minister on this topic over a month ago, and I'm still awaiting a response.

I'm going to make a couple of requests of you. You said that there have been several attempts to amend regulations. Would you be so kind as to forward to the committee the specific amendments you're looking to put in? We may be able to help you with that.

You said that you've started to keep records of those who are now found to be ineligible, but that initially you didn't keep records of those. Now that you've started your record-keeping, what does it tell you?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** First, on the amendments you're asking for, they were items of government privacy—Treasury Board relationship with Veterans Affairs and us. I'm not at liberty to give them to you, but if you went to Veterans Affairs Canada and asked them formally for the amendments they would give them to you. It's the only way I can convey them. I know what they are, but they're a bit of cabinet secrecy and I can't divulge them.

On records, in the past the phone would ring in the Last Post front office and someone would say, "My relative who was a corporal just passed away. Can he be buried by the Last Post Fund?" We would ask what service he was in, and if it was deemed that he was a modern-day veteran and not in receipt of any benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada, we would say he was not eligible.

We never ticked that box to show how many people have called us. We don't know. We have delivered services to six veterans in Canada. Right now we're hearing from our staff—we haven't amalgamated all the numbers—that we're getting about two or three calls across Canada in each district area looking for benefits for people who are not eligible. We're recording the number of calls now, and hopefully within a short period of time we'll be able to furnish this to Veterans Affairs Canada and say that the number is growing.

I have to stress that the number of people who wish to take advantage of the currently constructed funeral and burial program for modern-day veterans is quite small.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you, General.

Now we'll go to Mr. Daniel for five minutes.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, gentlemen, for coming here and being witnesses to this. We appreciate your time.

I have questions for each of you, starting with the colonel.

On the selection of people you have interviewed—I haven't seen the list, but it's just a general question—does it reflect the diversity of Canada so we can engage current youth in understanding some of the issues? For example, are there aboriginal people, etc.?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** The short and quick answer to that is yes. It was important to reflect all those who participated, and I think we've been successful in doing that.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Mr. Cuppens, the sad fact is that our veterans from World War II are passing away at a much higher rate than before, unfortunately. I think the number that has been bandied about is almost 500 a week, 2,000 a month.

Given that you're kind of pulling in all of your officers, will you be able to cope with this kind of increase in the number of people requesting Last Post services?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I mentioned at the close of my last answer that the number of modern-day veterans who would be eligible for the present program is considered to be quite small, because most of the active service members are superannuates. They've served longer than eight to nine years.

The traditional veterans population is diminishing, and as I mentioned in my testimony, within a few years there will be no traditional veterans left in Canada. Only a small group of people who have fallen on hard times will be left.

Remember, veterans exist not only in the active service, but in the reserve force. There are some who choose to put on the uniform for two or three years and serve as reservists. Some of them have been in Afghanistan two or three times. There was a large number in the last group from Atlantic Canada. When they go home and decide to pursue university studies and enter the workforce, if they fall upon hard times they may knock on our door and say, "Our son John died. Could you bury him, please?" Right now he wouldn't be eligible.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** My question was more about the older veterans who would be entitled to it. They are passing away in larger numbers. Yes, the total number of people is going down, but the number of people who are passing away is much higher.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** The workload associated with the number of veterans who are passing on right now is not a challenge to us whatsoever.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Okay.

How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** We have a couple of minutes left, and I know the colonel wants to respond to one of those questions as well.

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** There's one thing I want to add. On ethnic demographics per se, we also approached the Department of Immigration about new Canadians and looked at what we could do in this documentary to make this relevant and meaningful to new Canadians as well.

I was an immigrant myself some years back, and I think it's important that immigrants realize what the contribution was and how the military and those who are not in uniform shaped this nation.

• (0945)

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Just as an extension to that question, there are many veterans in Canada who actually didn't fight for Canada—for example, the Vietnamese. There are many Vietnamese vets from the Vietnamese War, and of course there are many Vietnamese who now live in Canada.

Have you considered finding out about their story in history so that the next generation could follow up on that?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Indirectly.

We did not set out to do that because the project would never have an end per se. But indirectly the answer to that is yes, in terms of veterans recounting their experience elsewhere, because we did have Canadians, albeit post-Vietnam, in Vietnam in the reconstruction commission. But the answer to that is, indirectly, yes.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Excellent.

Okay, that's it for me.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mathysen, for five minutes.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for being here today and providing this information and testimony.

I'm of the understanding that modern-day vets, when they transition out of the military, are told quite specifically that they're not entitled to any burial benefits. It would seem there must be some need. Obviously if Major-General MacKenzie is conducting a campaign of fundraising and you're hoping for \$1 million, there must be a profound need.

My concern is, and my question to you is, should modern-day veterans be dependent on this charity? It seems to me that they made a contribution, in many cases a profoundly significant contribution, and yet here they are reliant on the charity of others. If that charity doesn't come through, what on earth happens to them?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I'm not certain as to what is being told to releasing Canadian Forces members concerning their eligibility for a funeral and burial benefit. I would expect that the program is explained to them, and their eligibility to that program is also explained to them, but I'm not certain.

Remember, I did indicate also that there are releasing reserve members who have served in Bosnia, Cyprus, and Afghanistan.

The second part, of course, is this business of fundraising. The fundraising isn't solely intended for just burials. When I gave my presentation to you I said there were a number of other programs that we run. One of them is grave-marking. That's done with both donation moneys and with government moneys. We also have requirements to repair and refurbish equipment in our Fields of Honour, which we operate. We also need to maintain our columbaria. They all cost money.

We're looking ahead to the future, and at present we're doing some major renovations to the Field of Honour in Pointe-Claire. These are all done with private donation moneys.

I trust I've answered your question.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Is it appropriate, though, that the grave-markings and the repairs be from donated money? Isn't there a role for government and Veterans Affairs in terms of honouring, in death, our veterans?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes, and you noticed in my presentation I said "a veteran is a veteran is a veteran". That's my firm belief. That's the belief of the Last Post Fund. However, that is not the reality of the government program that we administer. We do the best we can with what we have. There is a subtle distinction, which is maybe not clearly understood, in how veterans are treated by Veterans Affairs Canada.

The traditional veteran is eligible for programs because of his service. It's called service-based. So if you were a World War II veteran and went overseas, you were eligible for a whole range of programs, the last of which is their funeral and burial program.

If you're a modern-day veteran, as was passed in the recent act—the act has a long, long name, and I won't bore you with it—this particular act is needs-based. The veteran has to demonstrate that there is a need for some assistance and then that need is answered by Veterans Affairs Canada.

As you would expect, many modern-day veterans who are superannuates would not have a financial need to have the funeral and burial benefit, but some would and some do. So there is quite a distinction between the types of eligibility requirements of Veterans Affairs Canada, one being service-based—all you had to do was serve. But the modern-day people—those since Korea—are needs-based.

Does that help make it clear for you?

• (0950)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Yes.

Colonel Nellestyn, you referred to the films, the documentaries, that have been created and produced and the importance of these modern-day veterans in terms of their contribution to the face of Canada, to our character as a nation, and that discrepancy in honouring their service. I find that very difficult to understand. Why, other than as a cost-saving measure, would we respect the service of some and not others?

**The Chair:** Ms. Mathysen, you've gone over your time, but I'll allow you a really quick question, if you were going to ask a question.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Okay.

Both of you described calls for help. Colonel, you described suffering that you've seen in these documentaries. I suppose probably there's not time now, but I wonder if you could describe, General Cuppens, the nature of the calls, and you, Colonel, the suffering that you understood through these documentaries.

**The Chair:** Very briefly, General, please.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I'm an immigrant and a Canadian. We are a special people. We live in such a free country, with all that we have, and when you project yourself out in the military somewhere where people do not have what we have, it's a natural thing to try to better their lives in some way. Our soldiers, sailors, and airmen have been on record doing just that since we went on our first deployment in the Boer War. I could give you anecdotes afterwards, many examples of the generosity of these young men and women we send in harm's way.

On the calls, some I was personally involved in had to do with very sloppy administrative practices within the Department of National Defence of individuals' records, medical releases. Had their records been properly maintained and had they been medically discharged, they would have been eligible for a funeral and burial benefit. But these poor people weren't. They were living on poverty row, and we helped them.

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to say that if we do a final round perhaps the colonel will get a chance then, because we are well over time now.

Mr. Lizon, for five minutes.

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, gentlemen.

I want to begin with some clarification. General, you referred to changes from the program review in 1995. When were the previous eligibility criteria established?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I can't give you an exact date. It would have been somewhere in the post-World War II period under the Pension Act. I just can't tell you the precise date. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon:** Would it be in pensions out of the Department of Veterans Affairs Act in 1986?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Just like the Pension Act, a number of changes were enacted in Parliament to the veterans burial regulations. Major changes were made at one time, but I can't recall the precise date. It had to do with the provision of services, embalming, the change of rates, and who would be eligible.

All I can tell you is that I know that prior to 1995 the means test, the threshold where you would be considered eligible, was cut in half.

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon:** The reason I'm asking this question is because I know 1995 was a very significant year, not only for the benefits you mentioned, but for large groups of veterans. I would like to remind the members of the committee, including honourable member Mr. Casey, that it was introduced in 1995, and the Liberal government introduced changes to the Veterans Act and some benefits. One of the changes cut off allied army veterans from veterans benefits. This was not changed until 2009.

I was working on those, and there's still a group of veterans—I guess there's a name for it, the veterans who were fighting in underground or resistance groups, I think that's the proper terminology—who were cut off at that time, and benefits were never restored for them. For allied army veterans, their benefits were restored in 2009. Just to clarify, these changes were not made by this

government. It was the Liberal government of the time that made these changes.

General, I would like to ask you a question in regard to the presentation you made. You used the quote of Colorado Springs. I'm disappointed to hear that you wished that we had similar sentiments in Canada. In your view, why is it that we don't have the same sentiment? With your being from the Netherlands, how do you view people of those countries, European countries that were liberated by Canadians? Because Canadians, as we all know, did not fight on this soil; they went somewhere else to help others. Could you maybe comment on this?

• (0955)

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Sure, and thank you for your question.

I was in Colorado Springs, and there's a large mountain there that was right behind our headquarters. It's called Pikes Peak. It was named after a U.S. army surveyor who came from Maine; his name was Zebulon Pike. I used to be quite brave in telling the Senate committees and the government committees who came to visit that Canada has never been invaded except once. Mr. Pike, for whom the mountain is named, was killed at the battle of York, and that town is today named Toronto. I used to smile when I said that.

Europeans have a closer feeling for the service of veterans than we do in this great country of ours because of a number of things. One of them is our size. As a youngster going to school in the Netherlands, I couldn't help but walk by cemeteries where veterans are interred. They're all over the place. You would find the same in England, the same in Belgium, and the same in France. This is an immediate thing for you. You see it and you ask, and people tell you what happened.

In Canada it's very difficult for someone who lives in some cities and towns, and in rural Canada, to stroll by a place where a veteran is interred. We pump it all up on the November 11, and for some distinguished battles like Beaumont Hamel and others, but we don't do a good job of it. So we concentrate it all in the week that has just passed. This program that Andy has talked about will certainly harden the hearts, and make Canadians proud of service, but we have so many issues in our country that the veterans issue doesn't percolate to the top all the time.

You mentioned Colorado Springs. Mayor Makepeace is an aboriginal. She used to conclude all of her speeches by saying "This is Colorado Springs, where every day is military and veterans appreciation day". No wonder; there are 250,000 military in that area. It was a source of pride for me to quote that because I think that's a sentiment we should try to instill in people.

I trust I answered your question.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

The next one is Mr. Storseth. If you want to share your time, you can certainly do so.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Absolutely, I'd love to share my time, if I have any left, Mr. Chair. If perhaps you'd give us as much time as you give the opposition, I would be most happy.

Thank you, gentlemen, very much for coming. Thank you for the service to our country, and also for your dedication to our veterans as you continue on.

I have lots of questions about the Last Post Fund. As a Legion member, it's something I've known about for a long time. I find the history of the Last Post Fund very interesting. As I understand it, it was based on private donations to help World War I veterans predominantly, or veterans of that era anyways.

How long did it take before the government became involved in the Last Post Fund, and started funding it? Do you have those numbers?

• (1000)

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I do. Mr. Arthur Hair discovered a Boer War veteran in a hospital in Montreal in 1909. This is where we started. Hair himself had been in the Boer War, and he recognized this veteran lying on a gurney. He had the same discharge paper in his pocket that Hair had. That's how he found out he was a veteran. He collected moneys in 1909 and they started interring these veterans with private moneys in the cemetery in Montreal—I'm not sure which it's called, either Côte-des-Neiges or Notre-Dame. There's a separate plot. They purchased a little chunk of land and there are probably, in my estimation, 30 or 40 of these veterans from that period and World War I interred there. When it filled up, they moved over to the adjacent cemetery and started buying land there.

The Government of Canada took over responsibility for the funeral and burial program with public moneys for the first time in 1921. They transferred full responsibility because in 1921 Veterans Affairs was also in the business of the funeral and burial program. But in 1995, I think—that's what I put in the testimony—all the responsibility for the burial of all veterans was transferred to the Last Post Fund.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you for that date.

I have another question for you in regard to private donations to the Last Post Fund. In the last five or six years, since I've been elected, I've definitely seen an increase in the number of people attending Remembrance Day ceremonies. As you said, a lot of the time it ramps up around that individual week of remembrance that just passed.

Have you noticed an up-tick in your private donations over that same period of time? What's been happening with the private donations?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I wouldn't say it was a dramatic increase in the amount of moneys we've collected. What happens is that it's event-based.

Your chairman would remember that in Nova Scotia, about four or five years ago, a large number of unmarked graves suddenly were identified. Right away the donation money just flowed—big amounts—because that was something that caused Canadians to be angry. We've had bequests given to us of some substantial amounts of money—\$300,000, for example—by generous donors, but these are blips. There has not been a steady flow of moneys.

At present, I would hesitate to guess that our donation accounts across Canada hold somewhere in the order of \$140,000.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** When it comes to a veteran, what would your definition of a veteran be? What is the definition of a veteran?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** We in the Last Post Fund use the same definition the Government of Canada uses; that is, one who has served his country in the armed forces past the recruit training stage till he's qualified in his trade. For instance, a pilot student who joins the air force and washes out after a year and a half is not a veteran by that classification, the same as a radio repair technician, who may take four years of training to become basically qualified. So we use the same definition as the Government of Canada: one who has served his country in uniform and has been honourably discharged.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Would that include reservists?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Excellent.

The last question I have for you is this. And I know this isn't necessarily something that the Last Post Fund would talk about, but I'm asking both of you gentlemen as former military members. The honorary colonel status is often bestowed upon members who were a major or a captain or a lesser rank. When they retire from the forces, they have bestowed upon them the status of honorary colonel for a time. Once that time is up, they go back to their regular rank. Is this a process you guys are comfortable with? Are there problems with that, or do you agree with that process?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I'm quite familiar with the program, since I was the one who designed the air force one.

Honorary colonel, or honorary captain in the navy, is a rank that's bestowed upon individuals of Canada—they don't have to be service members—in recognition of their unique contributions to Canada and because of their dedicated involvement in the unit they represent.

For instance, if you're the honorary captain of HMCS*Halifax*, I suspect you'd be a resident of Halifax. I suspect you would have been involved in some way with the veterans of service of Halifax. Similarly, if you're an honorary colonel of 403 Squadron, you would have been involved in that unit in Gagetown. The notion is that it's an honorary title that's bestowed on you by the Government of Canada, and therefore when your time is up it's removed.

You don't have to be a service member. There are a lot of famous Canadians who have been honorary colonels—Roberta Bondar, for example. I could go through a list of them. I don't find it as dramatic as when I retired I was a lieutenant-general (retired). I can't change that. That's what I was. But for honorary colonels, I don't know. You'd have to ask some of them how they feel about it. I don't have an opinion.

• (1005)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** That's why I asked you. I've heard both pros and cons from some former honorary colonels.

Do I have two or three minutes left, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** We're up to seven minutes. I'm trying to be as generous as I can with you.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I will allow it, if the colonel would like to answer. It would ensure that this particular committee member has had the most time of anybody.

Colonel, do you want to comment briefly on the same topic?

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** I don't have much more to offer in the way of comment. I think Louis said it quite adequately. I'll just say, as an example, that Senator Pamela Wallin is an honorary colonel of the air force, and Senator Hugh Segal is an honorary captain of the navy. So you will find people from all walks of life being honoured for their contributions, not only to the country but also to the Canadian Forces in general. I'm glad we have them, because in their own right, they're proponents, and they add a certain aura, if you like, to matters military.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I think my generosity has come to an end on this particular round.

I do want to point out to the committee and the guests that we have allowed a lot of time this morning on the first round, because there are no guests to follow. We would enter a second round if the committee is in agreement. We can reduce it or keep it going.

We have some public information on questions from the other day that I want to provide before we leave today. We'll have that time.

If it's the will of the committee, we'll go into a second round, unless there's any other comment. Do you want to shorten the time for each one from seven to four or five minutes?

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Make it a couple.

**The Chair:** Do you want to carry on as we are?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll go over to Ms. Papillon, for four minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you very much for having come here. I also want to thank you for the good work you do with veterans and with the families when veterans have passed away. It is important that someone support them.

I have some questions about the Funeral and Burial Program of Veterans Affairs Canada. I was wondering if the applicants were aware of the eligibility criteria, for instance the \$12,000 threshold. Are they aware of that? If their application is denied, are they informed and do they receive sufficiently specific explanations so as not to be left in the dark?

[*English*]

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes, as I said in my testimony, most of the applicants today apply by telephone and have a dialogue with a counsellor. The counsellor can be one of ours, or the person may phone a client service agent at Veterans Affairs to ask the same question. The person would be given an explanation of what the means test is. If the counsellor is on the ball, the next question would be whether the person can supply us with his or her financial information so that we can determine eligibility. Of course, before

that, the person has to demonstrate that he or she is, indeed, a veteran of the armed forces.

Did I answer your question?

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** In that process, do they receive an explanation of why the application is rejected?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Yes. In the dialogue they have with the counsellor, that's clearly explained to them. The counsellors are there as a service to them. They would be very inquisitive and would ask if the person understands. If the person still does not understand, we mail to them all the information relevant to the program and ask them to complete the financial analysis. Then we respond to them, either in writing or by telephone, to tell them whether they are eligible or not.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annick Papillon:** Thank you.

I also wanted to go back to the question my colleague raised with regard to the health problems veterans grapple with, and sometimes they are very young when they do so. In light of all of your experience and expertise, what would you suggest be done to help these young people? How can we ensure that health care specialists are helping them, and above all, prevent their being alone to deal with their problems?

[*English*]

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** Thank you for your question. It's one that would be more appropriately addressed to the Legion or to Veteran Affairs Canada. I will attempt to answer your question.

I was active with the Legion on the national level from about 1999. There was an amendment passed to the benefits program, wherein a serving member could start to obtain disability benefits while still serving. I can't remember the timeframe. It was early in the year 2000, but I just don't remember the time.

We went across Canada, a team of us. We went to all the military bases and explained not only the benefits that were available to serving members and veterans, but also the benefits that would be available to them upon release. We stressed the whole notion of keeping medical records, getting witnesses written down, so that when their time comes to apply for a disability benefit such as the loss of hearing or the loss of motion of a shoulder they would have the required information. After all, they have to convince the Veterans Affairs officials that this injury was service-related. This was all explained to the soldiers when we went around to all the bases. Today, when a soldier, a sailor, or airman is releasing, they go through a release interview some six months prior to their discharge. They are counselled by a new group of centres all across Canada at the various bases that are manned by Veterans Affairs people and military people and health care people. They tell them what their opportunities are and what their rights are with regard to disability benefits and pensions.

**The Chair:** Ms. Adams.

**Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC):** Thanks very much.

I have to thank you. You have an immense pride in the work you're doing and in the work that the Last Post Fund and the Power Workers' Union have done. I know that our government shares your passion for commemorating the great work of our veterans and our armed forces. So, truly, thank you.

This past week was pretty busy. You are quite right on Remembrance Week. I know at the True Patriot Love dinner in Toronto, I had the great honour of meeting our highest-ranking South Asian officer. There were an awful lot of folks who came up to make sure that he had been profiled. So there's quite a bit of pride in the community.

Later on that week, as I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies in Brampton, I had the great honour of catching up with some folks, who through an amateur historian's research work, had found out that one of the first Sikh soldiers who had served for Canada in World War I is buried in southwestern Ontario. They just found that out about three years ago. It was this Brampton resident who had purchased a medal at a thrift shop and then wanted to hunt down the person who actually won it. His research took him to southwestern Ontario and he discovered this extraordinary life of a young South Asian who had served our country in World War I.

I know that our commemoration study is looking at extending and reaching out to folks who don't traditionally commemorate Remembrance Day. We're focused on youth. We're focused on ensuring that we begin remembering the good work of those who have served for us in Afghanistan. And we're also concerned about reaching out to new Canadians.

Could you provide some commentary on the type of work that you are doing to reach out to those groups and what more we could do?

•(1015)

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I'll try to give you a short picture. My comment is not intended to demean any race or any nationality in our country. I took my wife, when I got re-married, over to Holland and showed her a cemetery outside my hometown where some 2,700 Canadians are interred, and she was quite taken by the way it was maintained. I showed her a number of cemeteries in the Netherlands and in Belgium. As we were driving back to where I was born, we were close to the German border and we went into Germany and she asked me whether the Germans had similar commemoration sites. I had to tell her no. She asked why not. I told her it was because they lost. They are properly interred, but their gravesites are replete with bizarre markings, probably because the people of the time were quite upset over what took place. I would expect the same. I've been to Japan. These cultural differences also exist in how people are buried and how they are commemorated. So I don't know how folks reach out to new Canadians. I know how they reached out to me. I've taken part in citizenship ceremonies and we take great pride in presenting our military history to them.

**Ms. Eve Adams:** Your hometown is just so wonderfully supportive. I know that a number of Canadians will do the march through the summer. We've had a number of members of Parliament go—this summer MP Laurie Hawn went—and they talk about the tears as they enter your hometown and the incredibly warm reception that the local townfolk provide. It really is an incredible experience, they say.

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** I think the short comment on that is for five years the country where I was born and where Andy's relatives come from was occupied by the oppressors and they were busy starving us to death. They wanted to annihilate us, and Canada came along and gave us back our freedom. It's a very precious gift, and that country will never forget.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

The NDP are passing on their last time slot. There's one more for the Conservatives, so we could allow the colonel to have a chance to respond and then if there is another question.... First we'll let the colonel respond quickly, if you would, to the question.

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** Thank you for your observation.

With respect to new Canadians or those who immigrated who are not so new, such as me, I think a number of those individuals want to have Canada's story told, the story of the veterans, because as Lou says, our freedom is a consequence of Canada's participation.

The other point, which Mr. Daniel brought up, is that there are people who have immigrated to Canada from war-torn, conflicted regions of the world who also have a story to tell, and that particular story is that, if necessary, it is worth fighting for the respect of the dignity of the person in all its manifestations, whether it be democracy, human rights, what have you. It is important that this be told.

With respect to the medal, in the documentary, when word got out that we were doing this, we were absolutely flooded with people who wanted to tell their stories. I hope it will stop at 60 episodes. The number of people per episode is generally more than one. We had to start making choices, and it's very difficult to start making a choice, because one veteran's experience, while it may be very different from that of another, is just as valid.

Yes, people want to tell their stories. I'm very pleased that in the last five to ten years, the notion of recognizing contributions made by Canada's military veterans and those still serving has increased manifold, and the interesting thing about it is it isn't just that they went to fight, but that they went to protect Canadian values. I'm talking Afghanistan, the Balkans, and all that. Canada stands for something. It stands for freedom, it stands for democracy, and it stands for the respect of the dignity of the person, human rights. That's how we are perceived in the world. And why? Because our military and all other aspects of the whole-of-government profile of missions now project that. I'm very proud to be associated with that, and so are those we interviewed.

•(1020)

**The Chair:** Ms. Adams.

**Ms. Eve Adams:** Thank you very much.

You're absolutely right on that. The Libyan mission we're all particularly proud of as Canadians, and the fact that Canadians put their lives on the line to go and protect people who were being bombarded by their own nation. We gave of ourselves to ensure that others could be protected.

That was a subject that came up as I was meeting with some grade six students last week. Obviously it was very topical. They had just gone through that in their current affairs studies and they found it remarkable to learn that 18- and 19-year-olds were sacrificing their lives to go halfway around the world to stand up for principles all Canadians believe in, and what an extraordinary outcome we've had.

So you're quite right. Thank you.

I'll go to Mr. Anders. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Anders, the time is reasonably short, but I'd like you to ask a question.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Sure.

I was very impressed with Colorado Springs as well. I felt it was like a Valhalla in a sense for the warriors who had served with Schriever Air Force Base and Fort Carson and the U.S. Air Force Academy and of course all the stuff they have inside the mountain there for NORAD.

I think every place that I ran across gave a 10% discount for veterans: restaurants, barbershops, you name it, whatever it was.

Am I missing anything? I realize their military footprint in that one location is probably larger than that of our Canadian armed forces across this country. Are there other things they do that make that place as special as it is for veterans?

**LGen Louis Cuppens:** In the Colorado Springs area, you've captured it correctly. There are lots of discounts offered to those who serve.

Remember that when you're discharged from the U.S. military, they have a different apparatus in their country from what we have. They have different medical care programs, and they have different income tax activities. So when you're discharged from the military, you get a thick book of all the benefits available to you, whether it is going into the nearest military base to get your teeth fixed, or to have a doctor look at you, or to get pharmaceuticals—and your children, by the way.

We don't, in our country, have our military dependants treated on our military bases. We have independent doctors look after the families of the military.

Yesterday, when I was flying up from the United States on Continental Airlines, they were announcing the boarding. They have their privileged passengers, the ones with air mile cards who have a massive number of air miles, and the airline asks their first class and their privileged members and armed forces members to board first, just because they're celebrating the veterans right now.

A veteran can go into an automobile dealership and get quite a substantial discount. There are a whole range of things in this book they receive.

I don't know what is issued to our Canadian Forces. I know when I left in 1998, I had a small pamphlet that was given to me, and it said that I could go to the local CANEX, I think. But they probably have something similar to that now. I'm out of date, you see, so you'd have to ask defence department officials what it is they do for their releasing veterans now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Colonel.

**Colonel Andrew Nellestyn:** If I may follow up to Ms. Adams' comments and questions, war is not the only activity in which the military participates. I cite Haiti, for example. We give assistance to the civil power—floods, forest fires, and this, that, and the other. So the contribution is much more expansive in scope, and this isn't just bayonets and airplanes and ships and all that kind of stuff. It covers the whole spectrum of human activity and human suffering per se.

One thing I do want to say—and I think I can say this on behalf of Lou as well—is that both of us, having been born in the Netherlands, and having been liberated by the Canadians, feel it is just an absolute privilege, the likes of which you cannot appreciate, to have served in the Canadian Forces, to have worn the Canadian Forces military uniform, and to have gone out and done that as part of Canada abroad in the rest of the world.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That's a wonderful place to wrap up.

Of course the additional bonus is that you've brought Peter Stoffer along. We don't know how to thank you for that.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** 1956.

**The Chair:** Before we wrap up and thank you, we have a little bit of public business. I'd ask, if you wouldn't mind, to just stay here. It's not very long, and then we're going to break. But I'll get back to you in a second.

Would committee members just bear with us?

First of all, the minister will be here on the 22nd, and not on the 24th. That will take place in Room 253 because it is televised. It will not be here. So that will be in your notice.

Committee business will take place on the 24th. I remind you that we're into the new study conversation and so on. We already have at least one submission in, so it's important that the parties reflect what their priorities are, and the discussion will take place that day.

The last thing, now that the analyst is back, is a comment on when the report could be wrapped up. So I'll turn to him to ask him to respond.

**Mr. Jean-Rodrigue Paré (Committee Researcher):** To be realistic, we could have what I expect to be about a 20-page report with fewer than 10 recommendations drafted in the first language next Friday. Translation and concordance between French and English and formatting for about 7,500 words would take about five to seven days, depending on the availability of translators. So it will take a week more for that.

The first meeting to consider the report reasonably could be December 6.

**The Chair:** So committee members understand that's the response to what we were talking about the other day, and we'll be able to review the draft report on December 6.



Okay. That's all I want to raise for information.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

I want to thank our guests very much. We allowed some extra time, but I don't think we wasted one second. Thank you for what you do, and thank you for being here today.

**The Chair:** With that, we're adjourned.

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